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Aboriginal Affairs

MEETING NEEDS AND MAKING CONNECTIONS:

A REPORT ON THE SASKATCHEWAN IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SETTLEMENT NEEDS AND RETENTION STUDY

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Executive Summary

Meeting Needs and Making Connections describes two major challenges to governments, service providers, and communities in Saskatchewan that are woven through the findings and recommendations of this Report. *Meeting Needs* refers to the challenge of finding better ways of addressing the wide range of service and support needs of the immigrants and refugees who come to our province with the hope of making a better life for themselves and their families. *Making Connections* refers to the challenge of working more cohesively to address issues, co-ordinate services, and incorporate newcomers into the social and economic life of our communities.

Over the last twelve months, the Immigration Branch of the Department of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs undertook the Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Needs and Retention Study to identify:

- Unmet service needs of immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan; and
- Underlying causes of the high rate of secondary migration of immigrants and refugees out of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan is not alone in facing challenges in attracting, settling and retaining immigrants and refugees. The federal government's Innovation Strategy released in February this year observes that "the labour market outcomes of immigrants are poor and worsening. Even with higher levels of education and better skills, immigrants are now less successful than Canadian-born workers with an equivalent education." Secondary migration is also a challenge across the country, as only two provinces, Ontario and British Columbia, experience net gains from the internal migration of newcomers, primarily from movements to Toronto and Vancouver. *Meeting Needs and Making Connections* puts these national challenges into a Saskatchewan perspective and is intended to provide a basis for governments, service providers, and communities to work better together to address them.

The study included:

- In person interviews with 200 recent immigrants and refugees currently residing in Saskatchewan and 72 telephone interviews with immigrants and refugees who had left the province;
- Telephone interviews with 50 Saskatchewan employers;

- Six focus groups with 50 Saskatchewan volunteers supporting immigrants and refugees and a focus group with 11 program co-ordinators from the four settlement agencies providing services to immigrants and refugees in the province (the Regina Open Door Society, the Saskatoon Open Door Society, the Moose Jaw Multicultural Council, and the Prince Albert Multicultural Council);

- 47 interviews with federal and provincial government officials and service providers, including education institutions and community-based organizations;

- An immigration literature review;

- Analyses of census, immigration levels, and other socio-economic data on immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan; and

- Five Feedback Workshops with 163 participants to review findings of the Study and gather recommendations.

Meeting the needs of immigrants and refugees and improving their retention in our communities will require a concerted effort by governments, service providers, and communities to address the six major findings of the Study, as detailed in Section 2 of this Report. These are:

1. **Better career opportunities is the most critical factor to improving settlement and retention of immigrants and refugees.** Accessing employment is not enough for the successful settlement and long-term retention of immigrants and refugees. The majority of them are able to access jobs, but these are mostly low skill level jobs that may not correspond to their education levels and prior work experience. In seeking more meaningful career prospects, these immigrants and refugees face a number of barriers. In particular, limited language skills, limited opportunities to access further education and training, and lack of recognition of prior learning and credentials are major barriers to their employment and career advancement.

2. **Opportunities to improve their language skills are essential to immigrants and refugees seeking to advance their employment and career prospects.** There are limited opportunities for improving language skills in Saskatchewan, especially language skills tailored to the labour market needs of newcomers. Limited language skills is identified by immigrants and refugees as the most significant barrier faced in advancing their employment and career prospects and it is also identified as a major issue by employers.

3. **Many immigrants and refugees needing education and training to improve their career prospects are not getting it.** Although immigrants and refugees are highly motivated to advance their employment and career prospects, most are not accessing further education and training opportunities available in Saskatchewan. Limited language skills, costs of education and training courses and programs, and limited income support are the major barriers they face in accessing education and training opportunities.

4. **Support services such as housing, transportation, and, for some individuals and families, counselling and childcare services, are essential.** While employment, language training and further education and training are central needs, the availability of appropriate support services is also important in ensuring that immigrants and refugees are not placed under increased strains while trying to secure their economic self-sufficiency and restarting life in a new community.

5. **Program and service delivery models need to be as flexible and as client-centred as possible.** Immigrants and refugees face some common settlement challenges, yet their needs are unique. These needs vary among individuals, families, and cultural communities, and across time. The challenge to the service system is to accommodate the varied needs and goals of particular individuals or families through flexible, appropriate, and timely programs and services.

6. **Successful settlement and retention requires a welcoming community**. Receptive and welcoming communities ease the strains faced by immigrants and refugees in restarting their lives in Saskatchewan. Communities must be involved through their volunteers, employers and service organizations in a collective effort to address needs, establish support networks, and provide immigrants and refugees with employment and social connections in their new homes.

Section 3 of the Report summarizes issues raised and recommendations suggested by participants in the June 2002 Feedback Workshops in response to the Study's six major findings. These were organized under three main headings and included:

1. **Reviewing broader immigration policy objectives for Saskatchewan and pursuing strategies to attract immigrants and refugees to the province.** Participants suggested government review its broader immigration policy objectives to address both labour market and demographic challenges facing Saskatchewan. They also suggested the province actively pursue strategies to increase immigration to Saskatchewan including better promoting the province locally and abroad, targeting specific groups for recruitment, providing incentives to immigrants and refugees to settle in Saskatchewan, and working more collaboratively with the federal government to improve refugee destining policies. Participants also

suggested that better information be made available on immigration levels to Saskatchewan and on the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program.

2. **Strengthening services to immigrants and refugees to improve settlement and retention in Saskatchewan.** Participants encouraged government to play a more direct and proactive role in strengthening services to immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan, particularly in the high priority service-need areas identified in the Study. They encouraged governments to make the financial commitments necessary to ensure that adequate services are available to immigrants and refugees. They suggested an integrated, strength-based approach will be required to address immigrant and refugee service needs and suggested government examines and promotes best practices in settlement and integration programs and services.

   Participants also provided specific suggestions regarding the strengthening of services in high priority service-need areas identified in the Study. These included: providing better orientation and information to immigrants and refugees on the benefits of employment; facilitating credential recognition; addressing barriers to licensing and certification in Saskatchewan; strengthening employment programs; engaging licensing and certification bodies, as well as employers, in finding solutions to immigrant and refugee employment-related needs; reviewing LINC program-objectives and expanding services under the program; providing more language program options to better accommodate immigrant and refugee needs; improving access to education and training programs leading to labour market integration; providing financial assistance to immigrants and refugees pursuing further education and training; encouraging housing development initiatives involving immigrants and refugees; encouraging alternatives to public transportation services (e.g., immigrant and refugee transportation co-operatives, employer sponsored bus shuttles); providing culturally sensitive counselling services; facilitating family reunification; encouraging new cultural communities to become established in Saskatchewan; raising public awareness on immigrant and refugee issues; providing better cross-cultural sensitivity training to government and non-government agencies serving immigrants and refugees; addressing discriminatory practices; and providing better orientation services to immigrants and refugees.

3. **Improving information-sharing, co-operation, and program and service delivery co-ordination among governments, service providers and communities.** Participants expressed the need for co-operation and co-ordination among governments, service providing agencies, and communities to address high priority immigrant and refugee service needs. They suggested creating ongoing forums to address immigrant and refugee issues, creating a single entry-point to programs and services, and designating contact persons within government and non-government agencies, as well as employers, to address immigrant and refugee issues.

The Report findings and recommendations have implications for a wide range of government and non-government agencies and for communities and underscore the need for improved planning and co-ordination at both the provincial and local levels. The breadth of the findings of the Report also highlights the reality that solutions do not lie with any single agency or level of government, but will require partnership and commitment at the federal, provincial, and community level.

Many of the issues and recommendations raised in this Report cannot be addressed in the immediate term. Some of them have financial implications that will need consideration in the budget planning of federal and provincial government departments and community agencies and stakeholders. Others have broader policy implications that will need to be more fully considered by departments and agencies. Some issues and recommendations may need to be addressed outside of the province through federal-provincial forums on immigration as they may require changes to national policies and programs. Section 4 of the Report identifies the immediate next steps the government, in partnerships with stakeholders and service providers, can undertake to work together to respond to the findings and recommendations of the Study, including:

- Establishing a Saskatchewan Settlement and Integration Planning Council, responsible for providing advice and recommendations to governments, stakeholders, and service providers on how to work together more effectively to improve the settlement and retention of immigrants and refugees in the province by addressing information-sharing, program and service delivery co-ordination, and policy issues. The Council will include representatives from the four settlement agencies in Saskatchewan, language training institutions, and relevant federal and provincial departments;

- Creating Settlement and Integration Co-ordinating Committees in the four main urban centres in the province – Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert – responsible for planning and co-ordinating service delivery and other issues at the local level; and

- Developing settlement and retention work plans and information-sharing strategies in co-operation with the members of the Settlement and Integration Planning Council and the Co-ordinating Committees based on the finding and recommendations of the Report and other initiatives agreed to by Council and Committee members.

Section 1: Introduction

Meeting Needs and Making Connections is a Report by the Government of Saskatchewan on the needs and challenges facing immigrants and refugees in our province today. Its purpose is to identify a way forward towards the goals of improving services to immigrants and refugees and retaining a greater number of them in our province.

The title *Meeting Needs and Making Connections* also summarizes the two central challenges that underlie the findings and recommendations of the Report. One is the challenge of meeting the wide range of service and support needs of immigrants and refugees who come here to make Saskatchewan their new home. For those who chose to come to a new country seeking a better life, immigration is a challenging and demanding process. For many, it requires learning a new language, becoming familiar with a new culture and community, establishing new support networks, and proving oneself in a new labour market. For some, it means starting over in almost every aspect of their lives. For refugees, who have been forced to leave their homes, there are added stresses of trauma and loss and frustration over changes in life circumstances and future prospects. Without appropriate services and supports to facilitate their transition into the labour market and their long-term integration into our communities, many immigrants and refugees will not settle successfully. By addressing high priority immigrant and refugee service needs in co-operation with other governments and community partners, we can work together to help those who come to Saskatchewan seeking a better life for themselves and their families succeed.

The second challenge is one of creating connections. At one level, there is a need to strengthen the working relationships between programs and agencies that serve immigrants and refugees. To a certain extent, information-sharing, program and service delivery co-ordination, and policy issues may be resolved by government and community-based agencies working together with a common objective of better serving immigrants and refugees. At another level, there is a need to connect immigrants and refugees with their communities, making them feel welcomed and giving them reason to make our province their new home. Although immigrants and refugees perceive Saskatchewan people as friendly and helpful, some do not readily become integrated in our communities. The onus is on governments, community agencies, volunteers, employers, and others to work together to make our communities welcoming of newcomers and responsive to their needs.

This Report is the end product of the Saskatchewan Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Needs and Retention Study. The Study was begun in the fall of 2001 with the goal of providing comprehensive and detailed information and recommendations for strengthening settlement services and improving retention of immigrants and refugees in the province.

There are four sections to this Report:

- Section 1 provides an introduction background to the Study and Report and an explanation of the information gathering methodologies used in the Study;
- Section 2 identifies Key Findings of the Saskatchewan Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Needs and Retention Study;
- Section 3 summarizes recommendation made during the five Feedback Workshops held in June 2002 and attended by 163 stakeholders and Study participants; and
- Section 4 identifies Next Steps to be undertaken by the government of Saskatchewan in addressing both the key findings of the Study and the recommendations from Feedback Workshops' participants.

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

The genesis of this Report was a decision by the Government of Saskatchewan to undertake stakeholder consultations in September 2000 on the kind of role Saskatchewan should play, if any, in immigration. At that time, the province was concerned that Saskatchewan was receiving comparably little benefit from immigration, as evidenced by:

- A long-term decline in our share of Canada's total immigration from over 2% in the early 1980s to under 1% by the late 1990s, with an even lower share of economic immigration;
- An unusually high proportion of refugees in our overall provincial immigration intake, with an average of 30% between 1994-2000; and,
- A high rate of secondary migration of immigrants and refugees to other provinces, with approximately 50% of immigrants and refugees arriving in Saskatchewan between 1980-1997 having left the province by 1998.

Secondary migration is an issue for all provinces in Canada. Ontario and British Columbia are the only jurisdictions experiencing net gains from the secondary migration of immigrants and refugees, primarily from in-migration to Toronto and Vancouver. Immigrants and refugees, like Canadian-born people, are increasingly migrating to larger centres. Newcomers are also attracted to those urban centres with larger concentrations of individuals of similar ethnic and cultural background. It is noteworthy that Saskatchewan's low rate of attraction and retention of immigrants and refugees occurred during a period of strong economic growth.

Between 1990-2001 Saskatchewan's average real GDP growth per capita was 2.1% annually (fourth highest among provinces) and personal disposable income per capita rose 2.5% annually on average (second highest in Canada) over the same period. It is clear from Saskatchewan's experience, and from the experience of other provinces, that strong economic growth is not, in and of itself, sufficient to effectively settle and retain immigrants and refugees and to reverse the migration trend toward Canada's major urban centres.

There is another challenge. Immigration tools available to Saskatchewan and other provinces to influence class and number of immigrants and refugees coming to their jurisdictions are limited. Responsibility for defining immigration classes and selection and admissibility criteria to Canada rest with the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Provinces are consulted on an annual basis on total immigration levels to their jurisdiction, but responsibility for immigration levels to Canada and its regions ultimately rests with CIC. Saskatchewan, like several other provinces, operates an Immigrant Nominee Program under a federal-provincial agreement with CIC. The Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program allows the province to select a total of 200 skilled workers and other immigrants per year over the next five years to address local labour market shortages and economic development goals.

While the input from stakeholders during the September 2000 consultations touched on a wide range of concerns, three issues emerged as central areas the province could make a more concerted effort to address. First, strengthening economic immigration to Saskatchewan; second, addressing accreditation issues facing immigrants and refugees; and third, strengthening services that could lead to improved settlement and retention of immigrants and refugees in our province.

In response to the September 2000 consultations, the province created the Immigration Branch in April 2001 with a mandate to address the three central issues identified through the stakeholders' consultations.

Discussions with CIC in the summer of 2001 resulted in an agreement to undertake the extensive information gathering process that constitutes the core of the Saskatchewan Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Needs and Retention Study. This extensive information gathering, which would not have been possible without the financial and other supports provided by CIC, started in the fall of 2001 and culminated in June 2002.

One of the purposes of the Study, and the dialogue leading up to and following it, has been to review the roles of the province, the federal government, and the community in settlement and integration services. Settlement and integration services to recent immigrants and refugees have often been regarded as a federal responsibility addressed through programs administered by CIC.

These include:

- the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program, which provides basic language training to adult immigrants and refugees with limited language skills;
- the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), which provides settlement assistance after arrival;
- the Host Program, which co-ordinates volunteer support to immigrants and refugees; and
- the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), which provides early settlement assistance and income support to government-assisted refugees during their first year in Canada.

These federal programs provide a basic level of services and support to recent immigrants and refugees. However, these services are not enough to settle and integrate immigrants and refugees in our communities. In Saskatchewan, moreover, basic settlement and integration services have been strained by a 26% reduction of federal settlement funding over the last three years resulting from the introduction of a national funding allocation formula starting in the 2000-2001 fiscal year. Securing adequate levels of funding for federal settlement programs in Saskatchewan remains a provincial priority as it affects the ability of immigrants and refugees to successfully settle and stay in the province.

All the provinces, however, provide additional services to assist in the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees. In Saskatchewan, these include: additional adult language training through the Department of Learning; language training for children through school boards funded in part by the Department of Learning; employment programs and services through the Departments of Learning and Social Services; literacy and post-secondary education and training through community-based organizations and education institutions funded through the Department of Learning; income assistance provided through the Department of Social Services; health services provided through regional health authorities funded by the Department of Health; and other services.

In 1996 an offer was made for the transfer of federal responsibility for settlement services to the provinces. While Manitoba and British Columbia took on the offer, Saskatchewan was not prepared to do so at the time because of pending negotiations on a national allocation formula for settlement funding. Saskatchewan continues to be concerned over current levels of federal settlement funding and allocation models and, consequently, is not presently considering this alternative as a response to the findings and recommendations of the Study. Moreover, for community-based organizations delivering federal settlement programs within Saskatchewan, securing a renewed commitment by the federal government to provide adequate levels of services to immigrants and refugees

remains a priority. These organizations welcome the provincial government recent involvement in immigration as a key partner to improving information-sharing and co-ordination of programs and services between the federal and provincial governments. However, these organizations continue to hold the federal government primarily responsible for the successful settlement and integration of newcomers, and do not wish the province to undertake responsibility for federal settlement programs at present.

METHODOLOGY

Information gathered for the Study covered a broad range of sources and methodologies. These included:

- Interviews with immigrants and refugees to Saskatchewan, including in person interviews with 200 in-province immigrants and refugees and telephone interviews with 72 immigrants and refugees who had migrated out of Saskatchewan to another province.

  For the in-province interviews, random samples of immigrants and refugees were generated from records of arrivals to Saskatchewan provided by CIC for the period January 1996 through July 2001. Immigrants and refugees from the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Australia were excluded for sampling purposes. These individuals do not tend to share with other immigrants and refugees characteristics considered relevant to the Study (i.e., limited knowledge of English and of Canadian culture).

  Random samples were generated separately for Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert. The number of immigrants and refugees interviewed per city was proportionate to the average annual immigration intake for each of these centres, with 75% of the 200 in-province interviewees equally distributed between Regina and Saskatoon and the remaining 25% of interviewees equally distributed between Moose Jaw and Prince Albert.

  Regarding the out-of-province interviews, names of immigrants and refugees were derived from the records of arrivals to Saskatchewan provided by CIC (when information on new place of residence was available) and from information provided by the settlement agencies and by some of the in-province immigrants and refugees interviewed.

  Both the in-province and the out-of-province samples were biased toward refugees as this population tends to present broader and more chronic service needs compared to family class and economic immigrants. Overall, 56% of the 272 individuals interviewed were refugees, while 43% were immigrants (for 0.7% of the total sample, immigration class could not be determined). The samples, however, were reflective

of country of origin composition of immigrants and refugees to Saskatchewan, respectively.

- Telephone interviews with 50 Saskatchewan employers on their perceptions and experiences regarding the hiring, recruitment, and retention of recent immigrants and refugees.

  Random samples of employers were drawn separately for Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert, including commuting and other smaller communities close to these major urban centres. A larger number of interviews were allocated to Regina and Saskatoon (72% of the 50 interviews) as these cities receive the largest proportion of immigrants and refugees to the province. Half of the employers interviewed were known to have hired immigrants and refugees in the past. Their names were randomly selected from lists developed based on information available to settlement agencies and based on the records of the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program administered by the Immigration Branch. For the other half of employers interviewed, it was not known whether they had hired immigrants and refugees in the past. Their names were randomly selected from lists generated according to the "Potential Employers by Occupation" information for Saskatchewan Labour Market Areas contained in the electronic site for the federal Department of Human Resources Development Canada. The "Potential Employers by Occupation" provides lists employers in a given labour market area for given occupations. The lists are not job lists as not all of the employers listed have positions available.

- Six focus groups with 50 individuals directly involved in assisting immigrants and refugees through their volunteer work as hosts and private sponsors. Hosts were invited to participate in the focus groups at the suggestion of settlement agencies administering the Host Program. Sponsors were invited to participate in the focus groups at the suggestion of Saskatchewan sponsorship agreement holders.

- A focus group with 11 program co-ordinators from the four settlement agencies providing services to immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan (i.e., Regina Open Door Society, Saskatoon Open Door Society, Moose Jaw Multicultural Council, and Prince Albert Multicultural Council).

- Forty-seven in person interviews with government agencies (8), education institutions (14), and community-based organizations providing services to immigrants and refugees (25).

Statistical and content analyses, as appropriate, were performed separately for each of these information sources. Detailed results of these analyses have not been included in this Report. They will be made available on the electronic site for the Department of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs (GRAA) over the next months.

Results were supplemented with information gathered through a review of Canadian and international literature on immigration, in particular, literature on settlement and integration issues and on factors affecting secondary migration of immigrants and refugees. A review of census information and immigration statistics compiled by CIC, as well as a review of socio-economic indicators on immigration contained in the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB), also provided information to supplement the results of the analyses. A compendium of the literature sources consulted and of Saskatchewan immigration statistics will also be made available in GRAA's electronic site over the next months.

The overall picture to emerge from these results was captured in the six key findings detailed in Section 2 of this Report. Percentages reported in Section 2 regarding results of the in-province and out-of-province immigrant and refugee interviews have not been adjusted in proportion to relative intake to Saskatchewan by immigration class. Thus, these percentages are biased toward refugees as this population was over-represented among interviewees.

The key findings of the Study were presented to a cross-section of government and non-government agencies and Study participants at Feedback Workshops held during the month of June 2002 in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert, with an additional workshop in Regina to address immigrant and refugee women's issues. Following the presentation of key findings, participants in the Feedback Workshops were assigned to discussion groups and asked to comment on the Study findings, suggest practical ways of addressing immigrant and refugee service needs identified in the Study, and provide guidance on priorities for action. A content analysis of participants' comments, views, and suggestions resulted in the summary of recommendations presented in Section 3 of this Report. A detailed analysis will be made available in GRAA's electronic site over the next months.

Section 2: Key Findings

This section presents the key findings of the Saskatchewan Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Needs and Retention Study summarized under six headings.

1. **Better career opportunities is the most critical factor to improving settlement and retention of immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan.**

   When asked to identify their top three needs during their first year in Saskatchewan, in-province immigrants and refugees interviewed most frequently mentioned securing employment as their top need (18% of responses). Moreover, when asked to indicate out of a nine-item list what needs they anticipated themselves and their families will have over the next two years, the vast majority of in-province immigrants and refugees interviewed (63%) singled out finding employment as the main need.

   Newcomers are highly motivated to become self-sufficient. More than half of all immigrants and refugees interviewed (58%) had been employed in Saskatchewan at some point. At the time the surveys were conducted, 56% of in-province immigrants and refugees reported they were currently employed, and 48% of these reported they had never been without a paying job since arriving in the province.

   However, immigrants and refugees also reported that they had found employment mostly in low skill level occupations in areas not generally corresponding to their prior education and work experience. The number of immigrants and refugees reporting employment in sales and service occupations, for example, increased from 21% to 48% after immigration to Saskatchewan. At the same time, the number of immigrants and refugees reporting employment in high skill level occupations declined from 44% to 18%.

   This is the more striking when one takes into consideration that 41% of immigrants and refugees reported having completed an undergraduate or post-graduate degree before coming to Saskatchewan. Among the in-province immigrants and refugees who reported being employed at the time the surveys were conducted, 57% indicated that they felt over-qualified for their job. When asked to explain why, they most frequently indicated that their current job did not meet their employment expectations given their prior education and qualifications (54% of responses).

   In-province immigrants and refugees interviewed did not experience significant improvements over time in their reported employment situation. After successive jobs in Saskatchewan, they continued to report employment predominately in low skill level sales and service occupations (e.g., cleaning, shelf stocking). Under-employment thus was common among immigrants and refugees interviewed.

This is further supported by the finding that 45% of in-province immigrants and refugees reported household gross annual incomes below $25,000. Under-employment was found to be particularly common among refugees, who were also more likely to report having difficulty meeting their living costs.

Meaningful labour market integration of immigrants and refugees is an issue of national concern as it affects newcomers to all Canadian provinces alike. In *Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians*, one of the two policy papers outlining the federal Innovation Strategy, the Department of Human Resources Development Canada points out that, despite higher levels of education and skills, immigrants experience difficulties integrating into the Canadian labour market. In 1996, the gap in employment rates between university-educated immigrants (73%) and Canadian-born (92%) stood at 20%. This gap has continued to widen over time, clearly suggesting that there are inefficiencies in the labour market integration process resulting in the under-utilization of immigrants and refugee skills. Across Canada, language difficulties, lack of recognition of prior learning and foreign credentials, limited access to education and training opportunities, lack of support networks, and possibly discrimination are factors hindering newcomers' integration into the labour market and reducing or eliminating the positive economic impact of immigration.

Of the 272 immigrants and refugees interviewed, 58% reported having had problems accessing the kind of job they wanted. When asked about the kind of problems they had faced, they most frequently mentioned limited language skills (36% of responses), limited education and training opportunities (16% of responses), and lack of recognition of prior learning and foreign credentials (12% of responses) as the main service-related barriers to employment in Saskatchewan.

These were also identified as barriers to employment by other sources of information consulted in the Study. Hosts and sponsors participating in the focus groups, for example, expressed the view that limited language skills are not a barrier to low skill-level jobs, but to better employment and career prospects. In addition to limited language skills, they also identified lack of recognition of prior learning and foreign credentials and limited opportunities to access further education and training as the main barriers to employment for immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan. Settlement agencies' program co-ordinators, on the other hand, identified limited recognition of prior learning and foreign credentials as the main barriers to employment in Saskatchewan. Representatives from education institutions interviewed in the Study emphasized limited language skills and recognition of prior learning and foreign credentials as the main barriers to employment.

In-province immigrants and refugees interviewed were in fact anticipating that, in addition to finding employment, obtaining general or job-specific language training (46% and 49% of respondents, respectively) and obtaining professional licensing in Saskatchewan (32% of respondents) will be some of their and their families' needs over the next two years. Among in-province immigrants and refugees who indicated they had already decided to leave Saskatchewan or were considering doing so (104 or 52%), 64 (61%) commented on services that, if available, would influence their decision to leave the province. The services most frequently mentioned were education and training opportunities (12% of responses), employment services (11% of responses), foreign credential recognition (5% of responses), and language training (4% of responses). Moreover, 36% of these in-province immigrants and refugees explicitly mentioned these services would make it easier for them to access employment or better jobs.

Not surprisingly, for the majority of immigrants and refugees interviewed, securing employment in Saskatchewan had been a frustrating experience. When asked about their settlement experience in Saskatchewan, they most frequently referred to the difficulties they had experienced securing adequate employment (23% of responses). When asked about other services that would have been helpful to their settlement in Saskatchewan, immigrants and refugees commenting on the question (75 out of 272) most frequently referred to employment-related services, including basic employability skills training, work placements, and recognition of foreign credentials (36% of responses).

Confronted with multiple barriers to employment and meaningful labour market integration, immigrants and refugees interviewed in the Study were generally pessimistic about their career prospects in the province. Limited opportunities to obtain better employment, for example, was most frequently mentioned by both in-province and out-of-province immigrants and refugees (23 % and 30% of responses, respectively) as the worst aspect of living in Saskatchewan, second only to climate. And the majority of out-of-province immigrants and refugees interviewed (66%) indicated they did not intend to return to Saskatchewan, most frequently mentioning lack of good employment opportunities as the reason (39% of responses). That difficulties in meaningful labour market integration is a shared national challenge is further supported by the fact that, even after migration to another Canadian province, these immigrants and refugees continued to report employment mostly in low-skill level sales and service occupations.

Limited career opportunities was identified as the main factor behind secondary migration outside Saskatchewan by immigrants and refugees interviewed and by all other sources of information to the Study. Out-of-province immigrants and refugees mentioned looking for employment and better career opportunities as the main reason for leaving the province (47% of responses).

Among in-province immigrants and refugees interviewed who had already decided to leave the province or who were considering doing so (104 or 52%), 90 (86%) commented on reasons for leaving Saskatchewan. The overwhelming majority of these immigrants and refugees mentioned looking for better employment opportunities as the main reason (80% of respondents). That 54% of the in-province immigrants and refugees who indicated they had already decided to leave the province or were considering doing so were actually employed further supports the conclusion that the main challenge is not just better access to employment for immigrants and refugees, but access to meaningful employment.

Immigrants and refugees are largely dependent on their support networks for leads to employment opportunities. Hosts and sponsors participating in the focus groups indicated that limited support networks place immigrants and refugees at a disadvantage in terms of learning about employment opportunities. Although 47% of in-province immigrants and refugees employed at the time the surveys were conducted reported they had obtained their job through a formal application process, 29% of them also reported learning about their job through word-of-mouth. Among interviewed employers who had hired immigrants and refugees in the past, word-of-mouth was a common hiring method (22% of responses), followed by newspaper postings (14% of responses) and referral by other employers (11% of responses). In the absence of family and friends, reliance on support networks within the community would appear to be an even more critical factor to accessing employment for immigrants and refugees.

Settlement agencies are part of the network of support available to immigrants and refugees in their new communities. However, very few (2%) in-province immigrants and refugees employed at the time the surveys were conducted reported the settlement agencies providing leads to their current employment. Most settlement agencies in the province run employment programs funded through Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services (Department of Social Services). These programs have generally focused on providing basic employability skills training (e.g., life skills, social skills, resume writing, job finding skills, interview skills, and basic computer skills), and provide limited assistance with job finding and job retention.

Settlement agencies' program co-ordinators participating in the focus group identified limited knowledge of the labour market and of the skills needed to secure and retain employment as the second most significant barrier to employment faced by immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan. Although generally satisfied with settlement agencies' services, 23% of in-province immigrants and refugees interviewed commented on the need to improve services, most frequently referring to employment services (e.g., readiness programs, orientation to the labour market, assistance finding employment, connections with employers) as the main area for improvements (30% of responses). It should be noted that the limited resources

available to settlement agencies also place constraints on their ability to undertake networking strategies to link immigrants and refugees to potential employers.

Access to employment for immigrants and refugees could also be enhanced through better utilization of federal-provincial employment programming. In Saskatchewan, the Department of Social Services, through its Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services, offers employment programs targeted to a broader group. These programs (including the Work Placement Program, discontinued this fiscal year, and the Bridging Program) are designed to help unemployed individuals receiving social assistance or Employment Insurance benefits get the training and work experience needed to get a job. In addition, the Department of Learning administers the Job Start/ Future Skills programs. These programs (including the Work-based Training for the Unemployed Program and the Institutional Quick Response Training Program) help employers secure the skilled workers they need to fill new positions by providing training to unemployed individuals who need job skills. The programs, which are employer- triggered, give priority to proposals providing training to members of a designated group (e.g., youth, social assistance clients, women in non-traditional occupations, First Nations and Métis peoples, people with disabilities, and visible minorities).

Only 6% of the in-province immigrants and refugees employed at the time the surveys were conducted mentioned finding their current job through a work placement. Among employers who had hired immigrants and refugees in the past, employment programs was mentioned as a common hiring method only 8% of the time. Focus group participants indicated that immigrants and refugees generally do not meet eligibility criteria for these programs as they often do not qualify for Employment Insurance benefits or are not receiving income support through the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan. Moreover, they identified lack of Canadian work experience as one of the barriers to employment faced by immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan and emphasized the need for incorporating a work placement component into employment and other training programs.

Providing opportunities for career advancement and connecting newcomers to employers and to employment programs and services present themselves as challenges, but more importantly, as areas of opportunity for government, service providers, and communities to play a more proactive role in improving settlement and retention of immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan.

2. Opportunities to improve their language skills are essential to immigrants and refugees seeking to advance their employment and career prospects.

When asked to identify their top three needs during their first year in Saskatchewan, learning English was the second most frequently mentioned need (15% of responses), after securing employment, by in-province immigrants and refugees interviewed in the Study.

Immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan can obtain free language instruction through LINC. LINC, which stands for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada, was introduced in 1992 as a key federal program to help immigrants and refugees settle and integrate in Canada. LINC provides recent newcomers with basic language skills in one of Canada's official languages. Newcomers are placed in one of three basic LINC levels according to their assessed language competency. In Regina and Saskatoon, a pre-LINC or literacy class is available for newcomers who do not meet minimum language competencies for LINC 1. Although Regina and Saskatoon also offer a LINC 4/5 class, newcomers with demonstrated language competency above LINC 3 have limited opportunity to receive higher level LINC services in the province.

The majority of immigrants and refugees interviewed reported they had attended federally funded LINC classes in Saskatchewan (58%). Data on LINC intake assessments in Saskatchewan for the period 1995-2001 indicate that 48% of immigrants and refugees were assessed at LINC 1 level. Most immigrants and refugees who had attended LINC classes reported having completed at least LINC 3 or above (55%). Among in-province immigrants and refugees, the likelihood of having a job tended to increase with LINC level completed, with those who had completed LINC 3 or higher being more likely to have a job than those who had not completed LINC 3.

Limited language skills, however, was identified by immigrants and refugees as the most critical barrier to employment opportunities in the province. Moreover, when asked to indicate what additional skills or training they thought they needed to get the kind of job they wanted in Saskatchewan, in-province immigrants and refugees most frequently mentioned their need for improved language skills (job-specific English, 22%; basic English, 20%; and advanced English, 17%).

The results of the Study suggest that LINC 3, and even LINC 4/5, are not enough for immigrants and refugees to secure better employment. In-province immigrants and refugees who indicated they had completed LINC 3 or higher were found to be nonetheless employed mostly in low skill level occupations (57%). Interviewed employers cited newcomers' limited language skills as the most common source of difficulties in hiring immigrants and refugees (36% of the 11 employers responding to

the question). They also mentioned limited language skills was the most common source of difficulties in the workplace (78% of the nine employers responding to the question) and the most common need among immigrants and refugees they had hired (89% of the nine employers responding to the question).

The federal LINC program is not a competency-based program. Regardless of level of language competency achieved, LINC services end once the number of training hours allocated to a newcomer (800 hours on average) are exhausted or three years after training has started. Moreover, LINC services are not available to immigrants and refugees who have become Canadian citizens. As a result, even immigrants and refugees in need of basic language training may not be able to access it. Focus group participants expressed the need for reviewing LINC eligibility criteria to allow for language training to be provided on the basis of need. They also suggested LINC be extended to provide language competency beyond the basic levels. In general, focus group participants indicated LINC particularly fails to address the needs of immigrants and refugees requiring work-related language training or wanting to pursue further education and training. They also indicated that the workplace could offer an appropriate venue for acquiring employment-related language and other skills and suggested training in the workplace be explored as a feasible alternative to classroom training.

In Saskatchewan, LINC services are currently delivered through the four settlement agencies and through education institutions specifically receiving federal funding for that purpose (Regina and Saskatoon SIAST Campuses, University of Regina, Cypress Hills Regional College, Parkland Regional College, and Prairie West Regional College). Overall funding to Saskatchewan for federal settlement programs, including LINC, is determined annually according to a national allocation formula. Over the last three years, Saskatchewan's federal settlement funding has declined by 26%. As a result, the number of LINC classes throughout the province has been reduced and multi-level LINC classes have become the norm. This, combined with the limited number of training hours available to newcomers, has placed additional strains on both instructors and learners who find LINC does not adequately meet language needs of immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan.

Besides the federally funded LINC program, there are few opportunities for immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan to improve their language skills. Language instruction can be obtained on a fee-recovery basis through specialized centres within our two universities. However, the costs of these services are prohibitive for most immigrants and refugees (approximately $2,000 for an eight-week course), as are the costs of privately offered language tutoring and training. Volunteer tutors and drop-in conversation/reading groups offer immigrants and refugees a more informal and flexible venue for improving language skills. These programs are funded through the adult literacy programs of the Department of Learning.

Limited resources available for volunteer tutoring programs and their reliance on volunteer tutors often result in long waiting lists. Drop-in conversation/reading groups, on the other hand, are not available on a regular basis as they tend to be funded on a project basis.

In general, the ability of immigrants and refugees to communicate in one of Canada's official languages has an impact on their ability to establish support networks and to participate fully in the rich social and economic life of our communities. Without adequate language skills, newcomers are limited in their ability to look after their own needs and those of their families. Furthermore, they are limited in their ability to share their rich experiences and knowledge with us and to share our Canadian history and experiences. The challenge then, is first to provide opportunities to improve the language skills needed by immigrants and refugees seeking better employment and career prospects, and secondarily to provide opportunities for immigrants and refugees to improve their general ability to communicate and function effectively within their new communities. Adequate levels of language training for newcomers through the federal LINC programming would be a useful step toward achieving these goals.

3. **Many immigrants and refugees needing education and training to improve their career prospects are not getting it.**

The average immigrant and refugee interviewed reported having completed some college or university courses before coming to Saskatchewan. Moreover, 41% of them reported having completed an undergraduate or post-graduate degree. The overwhelming majority of in-province immigrants and refugees reported their prior education and training had not been assessed to Canadian standards (79%). Of those who reported having their credentials assessed (21%), 32% (13 out of 41) reported their prior education and training been recognized as fully equivalent to Canadian standards. Of these, only three were working in the same area and at the same level as before coming to Canada.

Faced with difficulties in having their foreign credentials and experience recognized, further education and training in Saskatchewan is all the more critical for immigrants and refugees seeking to work in their area of expertise or profession or wanting to improve their career prospects. Indeed, among in-province immigrants and refugees interviewed, education and training was the fourth most frequently identified need (7% of responses) during their first year in Saskatchewan, after securing employment, learning English, and finding adequate accommodation.

Some of the immigrants and refugees interviewed (27%) had been able to pursue opportunities for further education and training in Saskatchewan. Although 31% of them reported having pursued further education above the undergraduate level, with

the exception of a family class immigrant, these were all skilled worker immigrants, and many of them were likely to have first entered Canada under foreign student visas.

Securing a job or better employment was the reason most frequently cited by in-province immigrants and refugees reporting having pursued, or considering pursuing, further education and training in Saskatchewan (73 or 50% of 145 respondents). Those who reported attending school in Saskatchewan and completing a degree were indeed more likely to be employed compared to those who had not gone to school or attended training in the province. The degree attained did have a positive impact on the occupational level at which they were employed as the majority (57%) of those who had completed an undergraduate or higher degree reported employment in high skill level occupations.

The overwhelming majority of immigrants and refugees (73%), however, had not pursued education and training in Saskatchewan. Of all immigrants and refugees interviewed, 29% indicated they had problems accessing further education and training. These immigrants and refugees most frequently mentioned limited language skills (31% of responses), inability to afford the cost of education and training (12% of responses), and lack of financial support while pursuing further education and training (10% of responses) as problems faced in this respect.

Providing programs to meet the language needs of immigrants and refugees wishing to pursue further education and training opportunities is critical to surmounting the barrier that limited language skills poses on newcomers' aspirations. Interviews with representatives from SIAST and Regional Colleges indicate immigrants and refugees accessing further education and training often fail to obtain passing marks under assessment exams administered by these institutions as part of their admissions procedures (e.g., Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Canadian Abilities Test).

Data from these interviews also suggest that immigrants and refugees rely on Adult Basic Education (ABE) Programs to improve their language skills and obtain a Canadian high school diploma, even though many of them have already completed a university degree in their countries of origin. Many immigrants and refugees applying for Adult 12 or Adult 10 programs, however, do not meet the examination marks required for admission into ABE programs, mostly due to limited language skills. And the few who succeed in accessing these programs tend to exit before completion. Some of the education program administrators interviewed suggested that the self-paced nature of ABE Programs and their focus on reading and writing skills, which usually present greater difficulties for immigrants and refugees, may be contributing factors to newcomers' decision to drop out of the programs. That frustration may also play a role is best exemplified by a comment from an immigrant enrolled in an Adult 12 program interviewed during a visit to one of the Regional

Colleges. He felt the time it will take him to complete the Adult 12 program "is a long time to [have to] wait to be able to prove [him]self".

Providing better access to financing for education and training will also be critical in addressing the needs of newcomers who wish to improve their employment and career prospects. For government-assisted refugees and some immigrants, accessing student loans is particularly a daunting prospect as during their first years in Saskatchewan they would have to repay the federal government for the cost of medical exams required for determining their admissibility into Canada and their transportation to Saskatchewan. More generally, absence of family and friends and the lack of an extensive support network within the community limits the ability of newcomers to raise the difference between education and training costs and living expenses which will be needed for accessing student loans.

Improving access to education and training opportunities for newcomers ultimately hinges on the ability of governments and education institutions to develop and implement reliable processes for the assessment of prior learning and education. Recognizing and using the skills and knowledge of newcomers will help Saskatchewan gain the competitive edge needed for securing a niche in the national and global economies. Engaging the support of professional licensing and certifying bodies, as well as the support of employers, will be critical to these endeavours.

4. **Support services such as housing, transportation, and, for some individuals and families, counselling and childcare, are essential.**

Better opportunities for career advancement, improved opportunities for language skill development, and improved access to education and training opportunities constitute a critical core of highly inter-related service needs. In addressing these critical challenges, however, attention needs to be given to the overall settlement context. The results of the Study indicate that key support services need to be available for immigrants and refugees to engage fruitfully in efforts to improve their language skills, pursue further education and training, and secure meaningful employment. Adequate housing and transportation and, for some individuals and families, access to counselling and childcare services are essential support services. Without these support services, immigrants and refugees are faced with increased strains in trying to meet their needs and make Saskatchewan their long-term home.

When asked to identify their top three needs during their first year in Saskatchewan, finding adequate housing was the third most frequently mentioned need (12% of responses) by in-province immigrants and refugees interviewed in the Study, after securing employment and learning English. Focus group participants emphasized the difficulties faced by newcomers in finding adequate housing, particularly in the case of newcomers with limited financial resources and in the case of large families and

single newcomers. Availability of large rental units is generally limited and housing standards are low at the market rate levels afforded by federal-provincial income assistance allowances. In addition to limited hosing availability, low rental allowances, lack of enforceable housing standards, unfair rental practices, and inadequate program policies (e.g., narrow definition of family not corresponding to newcomers' flexible family structures, limited time allowed for helping government-assisted refugees find permanent accommodation) were also identified by focus group participants as main difficulties faced by newcomers in securing adequate housing.

Transportation was the fifth most frequently mentioned need by in-province immigrants and refugees asked to identify their top three needs during their first year in Saskatchewan (6% of responses). Hosts and sponsors participating in focus groups indicated that part of the difficulty faced by newcomers in this respect lies in the limited availability of public transportation services to industrialized areas where their place of employment may be located. They also identified the limited availability of public transportation services as a problem for newcomers on shift work during evenings or weekends. Hosts and sponsors indicated that newcomers are willing to buy a car, but that this results in greater financial strains for the individual and family given their limited resources. Newcomers also have difficulties passing driver's exams due in part to their limited language skills and their lack of familiarity with our traffic regulations.

Availability of transportation services and of affordable childcare services were also mentioned by participants in focus groups as support services essential for newcomers attending language and other education and training, particularly women with pre-school age children and older newcomers for whom Saskatchewan's winter climate can be especially challenging.

Focus group participants indicated that counselling, especially in the case of victims of torture and violence, is an essential support service for newcomers. Moreover, hosts and sponsors indicated that changes in traditional gender roles, changes in family dynamics, and changes in status brought about by immigration also present challenges for some immigrants and refugees and counselling interventions are often required. When asked about their needs and the needs of their family during the next two years, 10% of in-province immigrants and refugees interviewed anticipated they will require counselling services.

5. **Program and service delivery models need to be as flexible and as client-centred as possible.**

One of the key findings to emerge across all sources of information consulted in the Study was the varied nature of newcomers' service needs. Individuals, families, and cultural communities face different challenges at different times throughout their

settlement. For this reason, participants in focus groups were uncomfortable with the suggestion that newcomers' service needs could be prioritized or addressed through a piecemeal, linear approach. They emphasized instead the need for an integrated, holistic approach to understanding and addressing newcomers' service needs and the need for flexible programs and service delivery models. In the words of one of the focus group participants: "You cannot separate one need from the others. You need to approach them in a holistic manner. You need to ask yourself what is it that the whole person needs. You cannot compartmentalize needs".

This finding also highlights the need for better intake assessments and procedures to determine newcomers' needs and goals and for referring them to appropriate programs and services, as well as the need for continuous monitoring and support to facilitate progress towards goals.

Moreover, the highly inter-related nature of newcomers' service needs speaks to the fact that addressing those needs will require better co-ordination and co-operation among governments, service providers, and communities.

6. Successful settlement and retention requires a welcoming community.

Family and friends are the main sources of support for newcomers. The presence of family, friends, or cultural communities somewhere else in Canada was found to be the second most common factor behind secondary migration out of Saskatchewan. After employment, out-of-province immigrants and refugees interviewed most frequently mentioned joining family or friends somewhere else in Canada as a main reason for leaving Saskatchewan (23% of responses). And 78% of in-province immigrants and refugees anticipated reuniting with family already in Canada will be a need during the next two years. In addition, 28% of in-province immigrants and refugees anticipated reuniting with family from abroad will be a need during the next two years. Federal government policy and practices regarding family reunification and refugee destining thus have a noticeable impact on long-term settlement and retention of immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan. The overall findings of the Study suggest, however, that in the absence of adequate employment and career opportunities, immigrants and refugees will turn to their families and cultural communities for additional support and consider migrating out of the province.

In-province immigrants and refugees, however, also identified the need to establish support networks in their new communities. When asked to identify their top three needs during their first year in Saskatchewan, making "Canadian" friends was the seventh most frequently mentioned need by in-province immigrants and refugees (5% of responses). As pointed out earlier, support networks are key in finding employment and they are also central in finding out about the community and the programs and services offered to newcomers. Communities then have a critical role

to play in welcoming newcomers and extending their support to them. In fact, immigrants and refugees interviewed mentioned the friendliness and helpfulness of Saskatchewan's people as the best aspect about living in the province (27% of responses), second only to the good quality of life offered by Saskatchewan communities (e.g., beautiful, peaceful, safe, small, quiet, with low traffic, clean).

Hosts and sponsors are part of a relatively small but enthusiastic group of community members who already volunteer their time and resources to help immigrants and refugees make Saskatchewan their new home. The Host Program was introduced in 1985 as a pilot project and became established as a permanent federal settlement program in 1991. The program helps immigrants and refugees overcome the stress of moving to a new country through the help of Canadian volunteers familiar with their communities. Service providers receive funds for promoting the program, selecting and training volunteers, matching volunteers with newcomers, monitoring volunteer hosts, maintaining records of all expenditures and activities, and providing necessary back-up support. Newcomers participating in the program are matched to volunteer hosts generally for a one-year term. Availability of volunteers usually determines how promptly matches are made. The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, on the other hand, extends Canada's capacity to resettle refugees from abroad in partnership with Canadian citizens and permanent residents who act as sponsors. Sponsors commit to providing basic financial support and care for their sponsored refugees for a minimum of 12 months and up to 3 years or until the sponsored refugees become self-sufficient, whichever occurs first.

Hosts and sponsors participating in the focus groups identified the need for greater community involvement in welcoming and supporting immigrants and refugees was needed within communities. They also indicated public awareness of issues facing newcomers needed to be raised among government officials, service providers, employers, and the community at large and emphasized the need for cross-cultural sensitivity training. Hosts and sponsors recognized their own need for better training. In general, focus group participants identified discrimination and limited understanding on the part of employers and co-workers of labour market conditions and issues facing immigrants and refugees as barriers to employment in Saskatchewan. Immigrants and refugees interviewed also identified discrimination on the part of employers as a barrier to employment in Saskatchewan (4% of responses). Unfair and discriminatory practices on the part of landlords and managers of rental units was also identified by focus group participants as one of the barriers faced by newcomers when accessing housing in Saskatchewan.

Hosts and sponsors participating in the focus groups also felt there was a need to provide better orientation to immigrants and refugees. Under the federal Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) funding is made available to local service providing organizations to deliver indirect, essential services to recent immigrants

and refugees including orientation, referral to community resources, general information, and interpretation and translation services. These services are available to immigrants and refugees for the first three years after arrival in Canada. While ISAP provides services to both immigrants and refugees, the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) provides services only to refugees coming to Canada under the assistance of the federal government. Under RAP, a range of direct, immediate, and essential services are provided to government-assisted refugees within the first 6-8 weeks from arrival and up to a maximum of 13 service hours per family unit. These services include: reception at the airport and transportation to temporary accommodation, assistance finding permanent accommodation, referral to mandatory federal and provincial programs (e.g., social insurance, health programs, tax programs), orientation to Canada and to the community of final destination, orientation to Canadian currency and to financial management, referral to broader-based services, and interpretation and translation services.

In a complex society, where responsibility for programs and services is spread across levels of government and community agencies, providing a coherent picture of the system appears at times a daunting task. This is further complicated by the absence of information-sharing mechanisms and limited connections among the various programs and services and the agencies responsible for them. When asked to identify areas for improvement of settlement agencies' services, in-province immigrants and refugees interviewed in the Study most often mentioned orientation and information services about communities and programs and services available (16% of responses), second only to employment services.

The challenge then is to create a welcoming and responsive environment for newcomers in our communities and to establish better inter-connections between governments, service providers, communities, and newcomers themselves.

Effectively connecting newcomers to our communities becomes even more critical when one considers that immigrants and refugees stayed in Saskatchewan an average of nine months before migrating out to another province. Thus, the window of opportunity to make a positive impact on the settlement experience of newcomers can be easily missed. Engaging in a concerted, collective effort to address their most critical service needs and to provide the support that will make them feel welcomed and wanted in Saskatchewan is perhaps the most critical challenge posed to government, service providers, and communities.

Section 3: Recommendations from Feedback Workshop's Participants

The key findings of the Study were presented at Feedback Workshops held during the month of June 2002 in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert, with an additional workshop in Regina focusing on immigrant and refugee women's issues. A total of 163 individuals participated in the Feedback Workshops. These included representatives from federal, provincial, and municipal governments; settlement agencies and other community-based organizations providing services to immigrants and refugees; interest groups; as well as focus group participants and in-province immigrants and refugees who had participated in the Study.

Participants at the workshops were assigned to discussion groups and asked to provide comments on the findings of the Study, suggest practical ways of addressing the service needs of immigrants and refugees identified in the Study, and provide guidance on priorities for action.

In general, participants were in agreement with the key findings of the Study, as they reflected their understanding of service needs and retention issues currently affecting immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan. A few participants expressed reservations regarding the fact that no significant gender differences in access to services were found in the Study. The Study was not designed to this issue. Focus group participants indicated that gender role expectations could lead to limited participation of immigrant and refugee women in programs and services and to isolation within the community. They also indicated there is wide variation among individual immigrants and refugees, as well as families and cultural communities, regarding gender role expectations.

Reservations were also expressed regarding the relative weight of better employment opportunities and family reunification as factors behind secondary migration of immigrants and refugees out of Saskatchewan. It was suggested the relative weight of these factors could vary across immigration class and country of origin. The results of the Study suggest that looking for employment opportunities was the main factor behind secondary migration for both immigrants and refugees, independently from country of origin.

During group discussions, participants in the Feedback Workshops emphasized or elaborated upon the key findings of the Study, and provided suggestions on ways of addressing these findings. Their comments and suggestions were subjected to a content analysis. In this Section, the results of the analysis are summarized under three main headings as follows:

1. **Reviewing broader immigration policy objectives for Saskatchewan and pursuing strategies to attract immigrants and refugees to the province.**

   Participants in the Feedback Workshops identified a need to define broader immigration policy objectives for Saskatchewan. They indicated that, although immigration policy plays a role in addressing provincial economic development goals and labour force challenges, it can also serve as a tool for addressing demographic challenges facing the province, particularly in rural areas.

   Participants also suggested that the goal of increasing immigration to the province should be actively pursued and provided the following recommendations in this respect:

   - Promoting Saskatchewan locally and abroad as an attractive destination and providing information on its comparative advantages;
   - Considering more proactive recruitment strategies (e.g., targeted recruitment);
   - Providing incentives for immigrants and refugees to settle in Saskatchewan (e.g., city grant to defray accreditation costs, additional points allocated for settling in Saskatchewan); and
   - Working collaboratively with the federal government to improve refugee destining practices.

   Participants also indicated that more information on the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) needs to be made available and that processing of applications under SINP needs to be expedited.

   Participants also expressed a need for better information on immigration levels to Saskatchewan and suggested that annual reports be made available to the public.

2. **Strengthening services to immigrants and refugees to improve settlement and retention in Saskatchewan.**

   In general, participants encouraged the provincial government to take a direct and proactive approach to strengthening services to newcomers and improving their retention in Saskatchewan.

   The need to address funding issues was also emphasized. Participants encouraged governments to make the financial commitments required for the successful settlement and retention of immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan. They suggested governments should:

- Ensure adequate funding to maintain a minimum level and standard of settlement services across communities in the province;
- Provide core funding to strengthen capacity of community-based organizations to deliver ongoing settlement and integration services to immigrants and refugees.
- Make access to funding simpler; and
- Review policy and funding frameworks to improve access to programs and services (e.g., implementing funding frameworks that promote co-operation among service providers, reviewing eligibility criteria for employment programs, reviewing eligibility criteria for federal language training).

Participants also encouraged governments to strengthen services to immigrants and refugees in high priority service-need areas identified in the Study and provided some general suggestions for better addressing immigrant and refugee needs. These included:

- Implementing an integrated, strength-based approach to addressing immigrant and refugee service needs;
- Building immigrant and refugee capacity to meet their own needs;
- Providing different and flexible program and service options to accommodate the varied needs of newcomers;
- Providing support services; and
- Examining and promoting a best practice approach to settlement and integration programs and services and promoting creative solutions.

Regarding high priority immigrant and refugee service-need areas identified in the Study, participants in the Feedback Workshop offered the following comments and suggestions:

(a) Improving employment and career prospects. Participants in the Feedback Workshops identified a need to provide better orientation and information to newcomers on the benefits of employment and the impact of secondary migration on employment prospects. They also suggested incentives to work be provided to newcomers.

Participants also encouraged the provincial government to take a more proactive approach to labour market integration of newcomers, placing greater emphasis on career advancement. In this respect, they suggested government could:

- Facilitate credential recognition and address barriers to licensing and certification in Saskatchewan;
- Provide better information on accreditation and licensing/certification processes to immigrants and refugees before coming to Saskatchewan;
- Provide better information on foreign credential assessment services provided to immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan by Alberta's International Qualification Assessment Services (IQAS). Also, Saskatchewan should explore establishing its own assessing body;
- Engage other levels of government, education institutions, regulatory bodies, and professional and trades associations in finding and implementing solutions to accreditation issues and to the labour market integration of immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan; and
- Provide funding to newcomers to help with accreditation and licensing/ certification costs.

Participants also identified the need to strengthen employment services for immigrants and refugees in order to improve their labour market integration outcomes. In this respect they suggested:

- Improving basic employment services (life skills training, training on finding, securing and retaining employment, basic computer skills training);
- Providing better orientation to newcomers regarding the Saskatchewan labour market, in particular, providing more opportunities for newcomers to understand how their prior training and experience translates into our province's labour market;
- Improving opportunities for newcomers to gain Canadian work experience (e.g., summer jobs, work placements, mentoring, volunteer work);
- Providing on-the-job support for newcomers and employers to improve job retention (e.g., job coaching, job mentors);

- Encouraging employers and co-workers to take a more proactive approach to supporting immigrant and refugee employees;

- Engaging employers in finding solutions and providing supports and incentives to employers to hire, train, and retain immigrant and refugee employees; and

- Promoting self-employment among newcomers by improving access to small business loans and by providing micro-enterprise training and support.

Participants also identified the need to review eligibility criteria for current federal-provincial employment programs to improve access for newcomers. They suggested making available employment programs specifically targeted to newcomers.

Finally, participants indicated that newcomers should be encouraged to make use of resources and services available through Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services centres. As an alternative, they suggested an employment services centre specifically for newcomers could be created.

(b) Providing more opportunities to improve language skills. Participants in the Feedback Workshops identified the need to review LINC programming and services. They indicated LINC eligibility criteria needs to be reviewed to improve access for citizens and other individuals requiring language training. They expressed the view that LINC services should be available on a need basis and exit from the program should be determined by level of linguistic competence achieved, rather than by length of services. They suggested appropriate tools to assess linguistic proficiency be developed.

They also indicated LINC objectives needed to be reviewed and services expanded to provide more than basic language skills to newcomers. In this respect, they suggested LINC training hours be extended, particularly in the case of learners with greater literacy needs, and number of LINC levels available to newcomers be increased. They also suggested that LINC classes could be offered to refugees destined for Canada while they are still abroad.

Participants also indicated more funding for language training is needed in Saskatchewan. They indicated that current funding levels limit agencies' ability to provide adequate language training to immigrants and refugees and emphasized the need for increased funding to support ongoing language and training, particularly for those immigrants and refugees with greater literacy needs. They also indicated that LINC funding criteria need to be reviewed as economy of scale considerations applied in the allocation of funding can negatively impact on the

availability of language services in smaller urban and rural areas. Participants in the Feedback Workshops recognized that, while more funding for LINC training is needed in Saskatchewan, creative solutions within current funding parameters need also be explored.

The need for program options and flexible delivery models to accommodate the varied language needs of newcomers were also identified as issues by participants in the Feedback Workshops. Their suggestions in this respect included:

- Reviewing contents of LINC programming and adjusting it to meet newcomers' needs;
- Assessing language needs in the context of newcomers' overall needs and goals and referring to language programs accordingly;
- Providing support and guidance to newcomers throughout training and monitoring and documenting progress toward goals;
- Making available more part-time, evening, and weekend classes, in accessible locations, in particular for newcomers working or attending school or training;
- Using new technologies and resources to improve flexibility in the delivery of language training;
- Complementing classroom language training with drop-in conversation/ reading groups and volunteer tutors;
- Providing opportunities for volunteer tutors to play a more active role in the language classroom. In particular, it was suggested that tutors and teacher assistants who share the language background of immigrant and refugee learners could be valuable resources in the language classroom;
- Encouraging community involvement in informal language training and providing proper training to volunteers; and
- Providing language training through a wide variety of agencies.

Regarding the inter-connection between language skills and employment and career prospects, participants in the Feedback Workshops suggested:

- Making available language programs targeted to newcomers wishing to pursue further education and training or to continue working in their professional, technical or trade area. They indicated than an integrated

approach to language and content training could facilitate transition into education and training programs and into the workplace. They also suggested making available more language for the workplace training and occupational language training; and

- Incorporating a work-experience component into language training programs to facilitate the transfer of language skills into the workplace and the gaining of Canadian work experience. They indicated language training in the workplace could also be explored as an option.

Finally, participants identified the need to promote professionalism among language teachers and to provide ongoing language support to immigrant and refugee children at school.

(c) **Improving access to education and training.** Participants in the Feedback Workshops indicated newcomers should be encouraged to pursue education and training opportunities in Saskatchewan. They suggested greater emphasis should be placed on education and training opportunities leading to labour market integration. They also indicated that education and training should build upon newcomers' prior training and experience, rather than duplicate their prior education and occupational experience. In this respect, they suggested developing and implementing processes for assessing prior learning and foreign credentials.

Participants also identified the need to develop and implement transparent, fair, and simple admission processes across the entire post-secondary education system. They expressed the view that limited language skills should not unnecessarily constrain newcomers' ability to access education and training opportunities and that, where limited language skills are a concern, transition programs to education and training should be made available. In general, participants suggested more program options be made available to accommodate the different education and training needs of newcomers. They also suggested training in the workplace as an option.

Participants in the Feedback Workshops suggested that making information on education and training opportunities more readily available could also improve access for newcomers. They identified the need to improve career counselling services available to newcomers, including opportunities to learn about different career paths and occupations.

Participants also indicated newcomers need adequate income assistance and support services while on training. They suggested that policy and eligibility criteria for training and financing programs be reviewed and that assistance programs specifically targeted to newcomers be considered as an option. Also, they identified the need to improve access to student loans and to consider other mechanisms for helping newcomers with education and training costs.

(d) **Providing better support services.** The findings of the Study indicate that adequate housing and transportation, and for some individuals and families, childcare and counselling services, are essential. Participants in the Feedback Workshops emphasized the need for adequate support services in the areas identified in the Study, as well as in other areas:

- **Adequate housing** - In general, participants indicated there was a need to increase the number of affordable housing units, particularly large family units, that are available in major destination centres in the province and suggested encouraging housing development initiatives involving immigrants and refugees (e.g., housing co-operatives).

  They also identified the need to facilitate access by immigrants and refugees to subsidized housing and low rental units already available through local housing authorities.

  They suggested immigrants and refugees be provided better assistance in finding accommodations and better orientation on landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities. The need for controls on rental rates and for developing and implementing housing standards was also emphasized.

  Facilitating home purchase financing was also identified by participants in the Feedback Workshops as an option for addressing housing issues and providing greater stability to families settling in the province.

- **Adequate transportation** - Participants in the Feedback Workshops recognized the need to make available adequate transportation services for immigrants and refugees who are attending language and other education and training programs or who need to get to work. They indicated newcomers should be encouraged to use public transportation services and, in this respect, encouraged municipal governments to increase public transportation services and provide better evening and weekend coverage, in particular to industrial areas.

Participants also suggested that alternative ways of addressing public transportation issues be promoted (e.g. , immigrant and refugee transportation co-operatives, car pools and bus shuttle services sponsored by employers). They also indicated facilitating driver's training and licensing could help address newcomers' transportation needs.

- **Affordable childcare services** - Participants suggested improving access to affordable childcare services, particularly for women with pre-school age children attending, or wanting to attend, language and other education and training programs.

- Mental health and counselling - Participants identified the need to provide culturally appropriate counselling services to newcomers and their families, particularly in the case of victims of torture and violence and in the case of families in conflict. It was also suggested that counsellors and interpreters from the same country as the newcomers are valuable resources in counselling and in assisting with emergencies. The participants in the Feedback Workshops also identified the need to build greater capacity among health and social services agencies to address newcomers' issues and to raise awareness among service providers and newcomers on mental health and general health issues.

- **Adequate income assistance** - Participants indicated that better information on income assistance programs should be made available to newcomers. They also identified the need to improve access and to facilitate transitions between income assistance programs. They also suggested co-ordination of payments under different income assistance programs be improved.

- **Translation and interpretation services** - Participants indicated that translation and interpretation services available to immigrants and refugees need to be improved.

- **Other support services** - Participants suggested that refugee claimants should be able to access legal support services and other settlement services while their claims are being determined.

(e) **Connecting newcomers and building welcoming communities.** Participants in the Feedback Workshops recognized that an important task for immigrants and refugees settling in a new community is to re-build the support networks disrupted by immigration. As families are the main source of support for most individuals, participants emphasized the need to promote policies that facilitate family reunification.

The presence of a cultural community was also recognized as an important source of support for newcomers. In this respect, participants suggested facilitating and encouraging the establishment of new cultural communities in Saskatchewan (e.g., simultaneously destining several families to the same community). They also noted that cultural communities already established within Saskatchewan should be encouraged to play a more supportive role toward newcomers. They identified the need to provide more opportunities for cultural communities to be involved in settlement and integration of newcomers.

The active role that the larger community can play in welcoming and supporting newcomers was also recognized. Participants suggested communities should be encouraged to be more visible in welcoming newcomers (e.g., poster campaigns welcoming newcomers in different languages, public recognition of newcomers' achievements in their communities) and to play a more supportive role in settlement and integration.

Participants in the Feedback Workshops indicated programs that build and expand newcomers' support networks within communities should be promoted (e.g., Host Program) and that volunteer work with immigrants and refugees should be encouraged. They noted, however, adequate funding needs to be made available for recruiting and retaining volunteers and emphasized the importance of providing better training to volunteers working with immigrants and refugees.

They also noted that more opportunities for formal and informal interaction between newcomers and members of the community are needed (e.g., forums, discussion panels, story telling circles, social clubs). In addition, participants in the Feedback Workshops suggested that better information on community events and recreational opportunities need to be made available and identified the need to improve access to recreational opportunities for immigrants and refugees, particularly during the winter. Encouraging newcomers to participate in community and school activities was also identified as a need.

Employers were also identified as critical stakeholders within communities. Participants in the Feedback Workshops identified the need to encourage employers to be welcoming and supportive of newcomers.

Participants in the Feedback Workshops indicated orientation services to immigrants and refugees need to be improved. They suggested developing information packages about programs and services available in communities and making these available to immigrants and refugees (e.g., through visa offices abroad, mail-outs with permanent resident card, kiosks and community information centres, seminars and workshops, electronic sites, or through the school system).

More specifically, they indicated that newcomers need better orientation on laws and regulations and on the "Canadian" way of life and normative behaviours and expectations within the community. The importance of providing adequate financial, budget, and consumer awareness counselling, as well as life skills training (e.g., communication skills), to newcomers was also emphasized.

Raising public awareness about the benefits of immigration and about issues affecting the successful settlement and retention of immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan were also identified as needs. Participants in the Feedback Workshops suggested the media should be encouraged to play a constructive role in raising public awareness. They also emphasized the need for cross-cultural sensitivity training for government and non-government agencies, service providers, volunteers, employers and employees, and the general public. They also emphasized the need to address discrimination and racism, particularly in the workplace and promote fair hiring practices. Encouraging respect for cultural diversity and providing support to advocacy groups were also identified as steps to be taken in addressing prejudice and discrimination.

3. **Improving information-sharing, co-operation, and program and service delivery co-ordination among governments, service providers and communities.**

Participants in the Feedback Workshops emphasized the need to improve information-sharing and co-operation between governments, service providers, other community-based organizations, employers, and communities. They suggested:

- Creating ongoing forums to address immigrant and refugee issues in Saskatchewan at both the provincial and local levels;
- Creating a single entry-point to programs and services for immigrants and refugees within communities;
- Designating a person within service providing agencies and employers to serve as the contact point regarding immigrant and refugee issues, particularly work-related issues; and
- Designating a contact person within each cultural community to serve as the contact point regarding immigrant and refugee settlement and integration issues.

Participants also indicated there was a need to increase capacity among service providing agencies to address immigrant and refugee needs and encouraged governments and communities to recognize publicly the work and efforts of settlement agencies.

Finally, it should be noted that, as with focus group participants, Feedback Workshop participants were generally reluctant to prioritize actions. Instead, plenary presentations focused on providing an overview of comments and suggestions emerging from discussions within each group.

Section 4: Next Steps

The Saskatchewan Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Needs and Retention Study was undertaken to find ways to strengthen services to immigrants and refugees and improve their settlement and retention in our province. The findings and recommendations of the Study clearly suggest that these objectives cannot be achieved by single agencies or governments working on their own and that real progress will only occur from partnership and commitment across the federal government, the provincial government, community-based service organizations, and communities themselves. This must be a long-term and ongoing partnership to turn the findings of the Study elaborated in Section 2 and the recommendations identified in Section 3 into action.

Currently there are no on-going structures or processes for co-ordinating programs and services to immigrants and refugees. This has placed the onus on community agencies serving immigrants and refugees, primarily the four settlement agencies, to establish working arrangements and to raise policy and program issues with provincial and federal programs. The Government of Saskatchewan will lay the basis for a stronger federal-provincial-community partnership at the provincial and local levels, by creating new mechanisms tasked with addressing the findings and recommendations of this Report.

1. **Saskatchewan Settlement and Integration Planning Council.**

   Saskatchewan will establish a Settlement and Integration Planning Council to work more effectively on behalf of immigrants and refugees to improve their settlement and retention in the province. The Council will provide advice and recommendations to governments, stakeholders, and service providers on how to work together more effectively to address information-sharing, program and service delivery co-ordination, and policy issues affecting immigrant and refugee settlement and retention in the province.

   The organizations that will be invited to participate in the Council will include the four settlement agencies, education institutions funded for English-as-a-second-language training, the provincial Departments of Social Services and Learning, and the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs (GRAA) will act as Council chair. Other provincial and federal government departments, such as Health, Industry and Resources, Human Resources Development Canada, and Canadian Heritage, as well as other community-based service providers, will be asked to participate as necessary.

   It is anticipated that the first meeting of the Council will be held in January 2003, and that the Council will meet on a quarterly basis or more frequently as needed.

2. Settlement and Integration Co-ordinating Committees.

One of the most useful perspectives to emerge from the Feedback Workshops was that needs and solutions vary across communities, and that communities can effectively respond to many of these needs locally. To facilitate local responses to issues, Settlement and Integration Co-ordinating Committees will be established in the four main urban centres serving immigrants and refugees in the province – Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert.

The Committees will provide advice and recommendations to governments, stakeholders, and service providers on how to work together more effectively to address information-sharing, program and service co-ordination, and other issues affecting immigrant and refugee settlement and retention at the local level. The Committees will serve as a mechanism to encourage communities to be proactive and involved in settling and retaining immigrants and refugees. Where issues cannot be adequately addressed at a local level, Committees and their individual members will have the ability to raise issues for consideration by the provincial Settlement and Integration Planning Council. Membership in the four Committees will be determined locally, but should include all key service providing agencies dealing with immigrant and refugee issues. The local settlement agency and GRAA will jointly chair the Committees, which are expected to begin meeting as soon as possible next year.

3. Developing settlement and integration work plans and information-sharing strategies.

GRAA will work in co-operation with members of the provincial Planning Council and the four local Co-ordinating Committees to review the Report findings and recommendations and to develop work plans for improving settlement and retention of immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan based on this Report and other initiatives agreed to by Council and Committee members.

An immediate priority for the Council and Co-ordinating Committees will be to ensure accurate information on programs and services is available to immigrants and refugees in a useable format. This may include information-sharing initiatives between agencies, examining case referral processes, and producing program and service information in formats that will be useful to newcomers.

Many other Report findings and recommendations cannot be addressed in the immediate term, but will require longer term solutions. For example, many of the service needs of immigrants and refugees will have to be addressed through federal-provincial forums as they may require changes in national policies and programs. A significant number have financial implications that will need consideration in the budget planning of federal and

provincial government departments, as well as in the budget planning of community agencies and stakeholders. Some have broader policy implications that must be more fully considered by governments and agencies before they may be acted upon or have implications for programs and services to other groups beyond immigrants and refugees.

Ultimately, the contributions of the Saskatchewan Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Needs and Retention Study and of this Report will be measured by concrete actions to improve the ability of immigrants and refugees to successfully build a better life for themselves and their families in Saskatchewan. The first step towards achieving this goal is to gain the commitment and partnership of governments and communities to work better together to respond to the findings and recommendations of this Report. If that is achieved as an outcome *of Meeting Needs and Making Connections*, we will have achieved a critical step in supporting immigrants and refugees in our province.